

Dakota in Exile: The Untold Stories of Captives in the Aftermath of the U.S.- Dakota War

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Carpenter's tone and accessibility. Gage helped in her own way by leaving a rich collection of attention-grabbing quotes. Carpenter's appreciation of Gage is apparent, and *Born Criminal* is both an interesting historical account and a tribute to her unflappable spirit.

Dakota in Exile: The Untold Stories of Captives in the Aftermath of the U.S.-Dakota War, by Linda M. Clemmons. Iowa and the Midwest Experience Series. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2019. xvii, 260 pp. Map, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$27.50 paperback.

Reviewer Gwen N. Westerman is professor of English and Humanities at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She is a coauthor of *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota* (2012).

Many works published about Dakota history concentrate on the 1862 war in Minnesota, often with minimal attention to its complicated causes and even less to the devastating effects on the Dakota people afterward. In *Dakota in Exile*, Linda Clemmons introduces multiple different points of view to broaden the analysis of these events through letters, newspaper articles, and reports written by people during that time. What distinguishes her work is the inclusion of letters written by imprisoned and exiled Dakota men and women, including Caskedanj Robert Hopkins, who grew up reading and writing in his native Dakota language. A Christian convert, he taught other Dakota people to read and write and served as a church elder throughout his life. The historic and cultural legacy of Hopkins and his family is presented in the context of the broader impact of the U.S.-Dakota war on the history of Iowa and the Midwest.

Clemmons provides readers with context for events leading up to the war, including the exponential settlement of the state after the 1851 treaty was signed with the Dakota bands: "In 1850, Minnesota had only 157 farms; by 1860, that number had jumped to 18,081" (20). Although she rightly includes land loss and reservation confinement, corrupt officials, proselytizing missionaries, steamboat tourists, and limited food and supplies among the many factors affecting Dakota people, the author overlooks the years of drought, grasshopper and locust infestations, and financial woes that left not only Dakota families starving by 1862, but also many of the newly established farmers in rural counties as well. (See Mary Lethert Wingerd, *North Country: The Making of Minnesota* [2012]). It is a colossal task to condense a complex history. The growing resentment of Minnesotans toward Dakota communities before the outbreak of war was, however, a major factor in the subsequent backlash against them, including the role of newspapers in fueling post-war hysteria.

What happened to those Dakota people after their removal from Minnesota is not widely known. Clemmons traces the journeys of the women and children from Fort Snelling (via St. Louis and St. Joseph) to Crow Creek near Fort Thompson in Dakota Territory. There the inhumane conditions of starvation in a drought-ravaged land were veiled by a “conspiracy of silence” among the government agents responsible for those women and children (57). Separated from their families who were sent to Crow Creek, the prisoners from Mankato, who ranged in age from 15 to 78 years, were removed to Camp McClellan near Davenport, Iowa. There the conditions were not only brutal, but also included “the objectification and commodification of Dakota for amusement and profit” (xiii). (See Linda Clemmons’s article on that imprisonment in the Spring 2018 issue of the *Annals of Iowa*.)

Amid this devastation, the Dakota people were writing letters in their own language to each other, to the missionaries, even to government officials. The author’s inclusion of these primary sources written by the prisoners, by the men hired as scouts by the U.S. Army, and by their family members adds an essential breadth of understanding to this aspect of the story between 1863 and 1869. Clemmons has done extensive archival research to gather the views of the public regarding those “curiosities.” She documents interactions among local residents, tourists, and Dakota prisoners who raised money for themselves and their families by hiring out to farmers and selling trinkets to visitors and children. It is a revealing look into their will to survive, adapt, and endure in the most horrific conditions imaginable.

Especially important is the focus on Caskedaj Robert Hopkins, which provides a window into the experiences of one family who suffered the lasting effects of incarceration and harsh conditions. When Hopkins’s wife, Wawiyohiyewin, died from consumption in October 1869, missionary Stephen R. Riggs “directly linked her death to the events that followed the U.S.-Dakota War, including her exile from Minnesota, her time at Crow Creek, and her extended separation from Robert during his imprisonment” (171–72). This personal and very human account has the potential to affect common cultural perceptions about the Dakota people who surrendered at the end of war. Their stories are valuable. Equally valuable is Clemmons’s recognition that because of the small number of literate Christian Dakota, she was “unsure of how much of his story was representative of Dakota people’s overall experiences” (xx). One family can never represent the cumulative experiences of all people, but *Dakota in Exile* may give readers another view of the complex narrative perspectives that contribute to our collective history.